

THE  
GARDNER  
FAMILY  
HERITAGE  
BOOK

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see file  
"What's in  
a name?"*

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*From Joycelyn Carlile  
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# ORIGIN OF NAMES

Between 1864 and 1936 there lived a Spanish writer, poet and philosopher called Miguel de Unamuno. Writing at great length on many subjects, Unamuno had this to say about the origin of names: "In Homeric times people and things had two names: the one given them by men and the one given them by gods. I wonder what God calls me?"

While Unamuno certainly had an interesting philosophical question, most of us have been too busy worrying about the names we call each other to give much thought to the answer.

In the very beginning, the most anybody had was a first name. These Christian or "given" names worked just fine until society became complex; until such things as trade and commerce came into being, then one name just wasn't adequate. For instance, if you told your partner that James owed 2 pieces of gold, chances are he'd ask, "Which James?" To bring some kind of order to a potentially chaotic situation, the various "Jameses" were described by the place they lived—"by the mill", "on the hill", "at the water." So eventually you had Mills, Hills and Atwaters.

People were also given "names" according to their occupations—butter, baker or carpenter.

Another interesting way of giving people last names (surnames) is to derive a name pa-

tronymically. That rather impressive term refers to a name based on your father's name. For instance, if your father's name was John and you were his son, chances are, you would have been called Johnson. The variations, of course, are unlimited—Peter and Peterson, Robert and Robertson, Michael and Michaelson, and so forth.

As you begin to trace your ancestors, you'll find having some inkling of how names have developed and then changed over the years is going to be very important.

The five most common names in America today are Smith, Johnson, Williams, Brown and Jones. But remember, that one reason so many people have the same surname is that many foreign immigrants, in an attempt to "Americanize" their names, either translated their names to American equivalents (such as Fox for the French name Renard) or changed them completely when they found their ethnic backgrounds were a handicap.

There were other ways names got changed as well. Many early citizens didn't know how to write their names, so when official documents needed to be prepared, the clerks often used phonetic spelling—a name like Boone could have been spelled Boon or Boonne or Bune or Bunne and so forth. And once a particular spell-

gale, gill	denotes ravine or narrow lane or hollow in a hill ie. fingal-woodpecker's (fin) hollow		woods, woodland pasture ie. Leighton-pasture by the homestead
<i>Gardner</i> garth, acre	<i>They were gardeners of soil</i> or small enclosures such as a small field, yard ie. Applegarth-an enclosed area of apples Sandiacre-an acre which is sandy	ridge, hrycg, rudge, rigge	the shore of the river or sea  a back or ridge ie. ardrige-a high ridge
hall, healh	originally thought to be a stone house, but now defined as a slope (healh), steep hill, bank ie. Westhill-the Western slope	sculf, shelf, shel, skel	a shelf or lodge ie. shelford-a shallow ford
ham, heim, hen, home	is usually combined with the name of the original settler ie. Buckingham	thwaite  ton, tun	to chop, clearings or a place cleared of woods ie. Thornythwaite-a place cleared of thorns  signifies a farmstead, commonly preceded by a descriptive term ie. Hampton-a high farmstead Dalton-a farmstead in a dale
hop	a small bay or inlet; haven, also a pool in a moor or marsh ie. Hopston-the pool or bay by the farmstead	weald, wall	a homestead by the wall ie. Walton
ley, loo, lea, leigh	fallow or untilled land or pasture an open place in the	wick, wich	a dwelling place; a bay ie. Hardwick-the abode of the herd, Sandwich-the sandy bay